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City-County Planning Division
2825 3rd Ave North
Billings, MT 59101

February 29, 2016

Re# County Variance #281 Entryway Landscaping for Bretz RV

To Whom it May Concern:

As a neighboring property owner of Bretz RV, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed variance.

First note, per Background Information, it appears Bretz knew the requirements of the code before starting construction. "Bretz was notified by the Planning Division that several elements of its proposed landscape plan did not satisfy the requirements of Article 27-1006 in order to avoid the delay of construction Bretz amended its proposal" Point being, they knew the requirements going into their project, yet chose to proceed anyhow.

It is not necessary to quote the entire proposal, in a nutshell Bretz is wanting to place less than half of the required trees, a fifth of the required bushes, half of the required living material and eliminate all landscaping islands in the parking lot and eliminate the façade relief requirement facing the interstate and Old Hardin Rd.

I am reminded, daily, of the more than 34 acres of natural vegetation, wildlife habitat and wildlife, grassland covering, trees and bushes that have been removed. Several very large, old trees, in fairly good condition were destroyed.

Trees placed along roadsides will certainly not block the view of a sea of RV's, or a customer's awareness that an RV dealership is in place. Window-shopping from any roadway doesn't seem to be in the best interest of public safety.

Conservation of water has been addressed, yet the Lockwood Irrigation Ditch borders the property. The land should have been water righted and the owner is paying an irrigation fee if they use the water or do not use the water.

I searched the county website but was unable to locate the results of Bretz last variance request in regard to the steel sided building, that they have erected. The building does not incorporate "recesses, off-sets, angular forms, landscaping features or other architectural features to provide a visually interesting shape."

Bretz is a welcome neighbor, but complying with the code should be required. The property will be a visual welcome of what to expect from the City of Billings, my understanding of why a code has been implemented and exists. Bretz indicated in their request that many businesses are not abiding by the regulations. I disagree. Many are and have built visually pleasing buildings and landscaped accordingly. Any that are not in compliance are probably old businesses, in place for many years, who may be willing to bring their property up to standard with a reasonable allotment of time. However, granting elimination, or reduction, of the code for Bretz, certainly sets precedence for future developments.

Bretz is not simply asking to redistribute the environmentally friendly requirements of landscaping to a position that maybe more suitable for the traffic they will host. They are asking to eliminate requirements clearly stated in the code, requirements that they knew were in place prior to beginning the project.

As a property owner, I respectfully request that the request for a Variance of Entryway Landscaping for Bretz RV be denied.

Thank you to all of the Planning Division for your commitment and enforcement of our city and county code.

Sincerely,
Carol Kraft
406-672-2372